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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/624,066	07/21/2003	Wes Johnson	1842-0018	5163
7590	01/20/2006		EXAMINER	
Michael D. Beck Maginot, Moore & Bowman Bank One Center/Tower 111 Monument Circle, Suite 3000 Indianapolis, IN 46204-5115			SHAFFER, RICHARD R	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3733	
DATE MAILED: 01/20/2006				

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	10/624,066	JOHNSON ET AL.
	Examiner	Art Unit
	Richard R. Shaffer	3733

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 21 November 2005.

2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 98-129 and 201-204 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) 98-116, 119, 120 and 122-124 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
6) Claim(s) 117, 118, 121, 125-129 and 201-204 is/are rejected.
7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on 21 July 2003 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) All b) Some * c) None of:
1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) 4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) Paper No(s)/Mail Date. ____ .
3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 7/21/03, 11/10/03, 7/19/04, 10/12/04, 9/12/05
5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) Other: ____ .

DETAILED ACTION

Election/Restrictions

Applicant's election with traverse of Group II (claims 117-19) and Species XIII (Figures 24-26, Claims 117, 118, 121, 125-129, and 201-204) in the reply filed on November 21st, 2005 is acknowledged. The traversal is on the ground(s) that Group I (claims 98-116), directed to a method cannot be practiced by hand. This is not found persuasive because clearly two fingers can be interpreted as being a plurality of elements in contact and when inserted between tissue surfaces (hand tissue, lips, other anatomical orifices, etc) which would distract the two tissue surfaces apart.

The requirement is still deemed proper and is therefore made **FINAL**.

Claims 98-116, 119, 120, and 122-124 are withdrawn from further consideration pursuant to 37 CFR 1.142(b), as being drawn to a nonelected invention and species, there being no allowable generic or linking claim. Applicant timely traversed the restriction (election) requirement in the reply filed on November 21st, 2005.

Double Patenting

The nonstatutory double patenting rejection is based on a judicially created doctrine grounded in public policy (a policy reflected in the statute) so as to prevent the unjustified or improper timewise extension of the "right to exclude" granted by a patent and to prevent possible harassment by multiple assignees. A nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting rejection is appropriate where the conflicting claims are not identical, but at least one examined application claim is not patentably distinct from the reference claim(s) because the examined application claim is either anticipated by, or would have been obvious over, the reference claim(s). See, e.g., *In re Berg*, 140 F.3d 1428, 46 USPQ2d 1226 (Fed. Cir. 1998); *In re Goodman*, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *In re Longi*, 759 F.2d 887, 225 USPQ 645 (Fed. Cir. 1985); *In re Van Ornum*, 686 F.2d 937, 214 USPQ 761 (CCPA 1982); *In re Vogel*, 422 F.2d 438, 164 USPQ 619 (CCPA 1970); and *In re Thorington*, 418 F.2d 528, 163 USPQ 644 (CCPA 1969).

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(c) or 1.321(d) may be used to overcome an actual or provisional rejection based on a nonstatutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent either is shown to be commonly owned with this application, or claims an invention made as a result of activities undertaken within the scope of a joint research agreement.

Effective January 1, 1994, a registered attorney or agent of record may sign a terminal disclaimer. A terminal disclaimer signed by the assignee must fully comply with 37 CFR 3.73(b).

Claims 117, 118, 121, 125-129, and 204 are rejected on the ground of nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 39-71 of U.S. Patent No. 6,595,998. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because the differences between the application and patent lies in the fact that the patent claims include many more elements and is thus more specific. Thus, the patent as claimed in 39-71 is in effect a "species" of the "generic" invention of claims 117, 118, 121, 125-129, and 204 in the current application. It has been held that the generic invention is "anticipated" by the "species." See *In re Goodman*, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 129 and 201-203 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claim 129 recites the limitation "said column" in line 3. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Claim 201 recites the limitation "the bottom" and "said column" in lines 2 and 3.

There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Claim 202 recites the limitation "the top" and "said column" in lines 2 and 3.

There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Claim 203 recites the limitation "said bottom" and "said column" in lines 1 and 2.

There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 117, 118, 121 125-129, and 204 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Brantigan (US Patent 5,192,327).

Brantigan discloses an apparatus comprising a plurality of wafers (11) disposed one atop the other in cooperative contact forming a structure intended for use between two vertebral bodies, and each wafer interfaces with another via surfaces that are generally flat with complementary ridges (22b) and grooves (22c) to provide for constrained degrees (against the ridges as well as supporting the wafers vertically) of contact.

Claims 117 and 201-203 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Samani (US Patent 5,645,599).

Samani discloses a device comprising a plurality of wafers (**5b** and **15**) configured for consecutive receipt, wherein the top wafer has a length larger than wafer **15**, and the bottom wafer has a length larger than the top most wafer (top most **5b**) and wafer **15**.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Richard R. Shaffer whose telephone number is 571-272-8683. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday during (7am-5pm).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Eduardo Robert can be reached on 571-272-4719. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Richard Shaffer

Richard Shaffer
January 11th, 2006


EDUARDO C. ROBERT
PERVISOY PATENT EXAMINER